

Message Text

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R 140800Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4920

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 1062

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, EI

SUBJ: LITTLEJOHN CASE CREATES ANGLO-IRISH STRAINS

1. LITTLEJOHN CASE HAS GROWN TO FULL-SCALE SCANDAL, THANKS TO RECENT HOT STATEMENTS AND NEW DISCLOSURES.

2. MOST SERIOUS ASPECT OF CASE IS BELIEF, NOW WIDESPREAD, THAT BRITISH WERE EMPLOYING "AGENTS PROVOCATEURS" IN ADDITION TO MERE SPIES. PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE INCLINED TO HOLD BRITISH RESPONSIBLE FOR DUBLIN BLASTS LAST DECEMBER AND OTHER INCIDENTS. EX-PM LYNCH, A RESPECTED AND CREDIBLE LEADER, GAVE THIS THEORY A BIG BOOST IN BRITISH TV INTERVIEW. HE SAID THAT HE HAD SUSPECTED BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN DECEMBER, THOUGH HE HAD NO EVIDENCE, AND HIS SUSPICIONS WERE FURTHER AROUSED FOLLOWING LITTLEJOHN DISCLOSURES. ONE ELEMENT IN HIS SUSPICIONS WAS FACT THAT IRA HAD NEVER ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY. SEAN MACBRIDE, ANOTHER RESPECTED FIGURE HERE, HAS VOICED SIMILAR VIEWS. (ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, HMG HAS SAID THAT SUCH SUSPICIONS ARE "ENTIRELY WITHOUT FOUNDATION.")

3. ANOTHER TROUBLESOME ASPECT IS THAT DUBLIN/LONDON COOPERATION, ESPECIALLY IN SECURITY, HAS COME UNDER BROAD SUSPICION. OVER YEARS, BRITISH AND IRISH OFFICIALS HAVE WORKED OUT MANY COOPERATIVE
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MECHANISMS, BUT PRESS REPORTS NOW MAKE THEM APPEAR SINISTER.

PROBLEM IS BEING KEPT ALIVE BY SHARP PUBLIC DEBATE AS TO WHETHER LYNCH GOVT HAD REASON TO SUSPECT RAMIFICATIONS OF LITTLEJOHN CASE. CURRENT GOVT CLAIMS THAT ITS PRECECESSOR WAS INFORMED, WHILE LYNCH'S EX-ATTORNEY GENERAL DENIES CHARGE IN STRONGEST TERMS. PARTY CLASH FUELS PRESS DEMANDS FOR FULL PUBLIC INQUIRY, WHICH IN TURN COULD KEEP ISSUE ALIVE FOR MONTHS.

4. LITTLEJOHN CASE HAS COMPLICATED DUBLIN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH NORTHERN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AS WELL AS WITH LONDON. SOME SDLP POLITICIANS HAVE LONG SUSPECTED PRESENT GOI OF BEING TOO SOFT ON BOTH BRITISH AND NORTHERN PROTESTANTS. (CONOR CRUISE-O'BRIEN DRAWS MOST OF THE FIRE, BUT FONMIN FITZGERALD IS NOT EXEMPT.) IVAN COOPER OF SDLP WAS FIRST TO CALL ON GOI TO INSTITUTE FULL PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO BRITISH SPYING, AND HE WAS RAPIDLY SECONDED BY DUBLIN PRESS. IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, LONDON/DUBLIN TALKS ON ANY PART OF NI PROBLEM MUST BE MORE DIFFICULT, AND SUCH TALKS ARE ESSENTIAL TO PEACEFUL SOLUTION.

5. AFTER CABINET MEETING FRIDAY, GOI RELEASED STATEMENT EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER DAMAGE TO ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS. STATEMENT CONCLUDED: "...IT WAS MADE CLEAR TO THE BRITISH GOVT THAT INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES ON THEIR PART IN THE REPUBLIC ARE UNACCEPTABLE AND COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, AND THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC HAS TO BE LEFT TO THE IRISH GOVT." UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, THIS WAS PROBABLY MINIMUM RESPONSE FROM GOI. THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT IT HAS CALMED PUBLIC OPINION, AND PRESS IS CALLING FOR MORE RIGOROUS GOVT ACTION. GOI IS OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO LOW-KEY ITS RESPONSE, THOUGH FONOFF CONTACT TOLD US THAT "OF COURSE, WE'RE PRETTY HOT UNDER THE COLLAR."

6. COMMENT: CASE HAS CREATED TROUBLE FAR OUT OF PROPORTION TO ANY SUBSTANCE YET DISCLOSED. NEVERTHELESS, THIS IS STILL A SCANDAL, NOT A CRISIS. GOI--AND EVEN PUBLIC--ARE WELL AWARE OF NEED FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH LONDON. AWARENESS IS EVIDENT IN HANDLING OF CASE. THERE HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN DAMAGE TO DUBLIN/LONDON CONFIDENT AT A BAD TIME. MOORE

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